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# **Evergreen Rhododendron** (*Rhododendron* species)

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

## Summary:

Foliage: Evergreen Height: 6 to 15 feet (depending on species or cultivar) Spread: 5 to 15 feet (depending on species or cultivar) Shape: Upright, rounded to oval There are many *Rhododendron* species and cultivars thereof, as well as hundreds of hybrids. *Rhododendron* species come in many sizes and shapes with a wide variety of leaf and flower forms. Azaleas are in the *Rhododendron* genus and will discussed in another article.

## **Plant Needs:**

Zone: 4 to 7 (depending on species or cultivar) Light: Partial shade Moisture: Moist to average Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay loam pH Range: 3.7 to 6.5

# **Functions:**

Suggested uses for this plant include border, massing, foundation and specimen plant.

#### **Planting Notes:**

*Rhododendron* plants do best with afternoon shade. Thus, they are best placed on the east side of a house (within shade pattern). The soil must be well drained, thus a heavy clay soil is inappropriate for *Rhododendron*.

#### Care:

Mulch plants and irrigate during periods of drought. Prune all diseased branches as soon as noticed.

#### **Problems:**

Susceptible to a number of diseases including root rot, petal blight, and dieback. Insect pests include aphids, borers, lacebugs, scale insects, and red spider mites, weevils and whitefly.

#### **Alternatives:**

Consult garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area. The American Rhododendron Society (http://www.rhododendron.org/) covers many issues and types of evergreen rhododendrons. Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*) cultivars:

`Roseum Elegans' has lavender pink flowers.

`Nova Zembla' has red flowers and is cold and heat tolerant.

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If catawba rhododendron is in a suitable place it can grow to 15 feet tall and almost as wide. Thus, careful placement is needed.

Yak rhododendron (*Rhododendron yakushimanum*) is a slow-growing species and is more suitable for areas with limited space around a house. There are several cultivars of this species. There are hundreds of *Rhododendron* hybrids in the nursery trade with a vast array of sizes, forms, hardiness, leaf, and flower characteristics.

#### **Comments:**

When selecting a *Rhododendron* species, the most important characteristics to check area the species' hardiness and tolerance of sun and heat. Once you have determined that the species is appropriate for your area, then select a cultivar with the appropriate size and desired flower/leaf characteristics.

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